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UNCLAS HARARE 001409

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION PRESIDENT BUSH'S VISIT TO AFRICA;
HARARE

1. Under headline "Bush putting up a faade" the July 10 edition of the independent weekly "The Financial Gazette" carried the following opinion piece by Taungana Ndoro under his regular column "Inside Politics" on page 13, in which he bemoans the exclusion of Zimbabwe from President Bush's itinerary in Africa. Excerpts:

". . .It's folly for Bush to think that he can solve Zimbabwe's problems via South Africa. President Thabo Mbeki's position on that one is very clear - leave Zimbabweans to solve their own problems, period! The only logical thing for Bush to harangue about is Mugabe's asylum in South Africa. Mbeki should simply be persuaded to offer Mugabe asylum just as Nigeria's Olusegun Obasanjo offered Charles Taylor of Liberia. If Bush's visit to Africa was really in earnest, he would have been in Harare today urging talks between the ruling ZANU PF and the opposition MDC. Zimbabwe is drowning in economic debris and all Bush can do to help is watch from a distance and try and push Mbeki to the forefront of maneuvering an amicable settlement for the beleaguered Zimbabweans. The problem is that there is nothing at stake for the Americans in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is not Iraq. It does not have oil. . .There is therefore, not a chance in hell for Zimbabwe to tempt the Americans' insatiable taste for oil. We do not have weapons of mass destruction either. . .Americans will be Americans. If their interests are not threatened, then they have no interest in whatever venture - not even the Zimbabwe crisis. . . ."

SULLIVAN